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Former parade ground now site of

(Editor's Note: The following article on Carbondale's Memorial Park will be published in two parts, with the second part appearing in next week's issue.)

By S. ROBERT POWELL

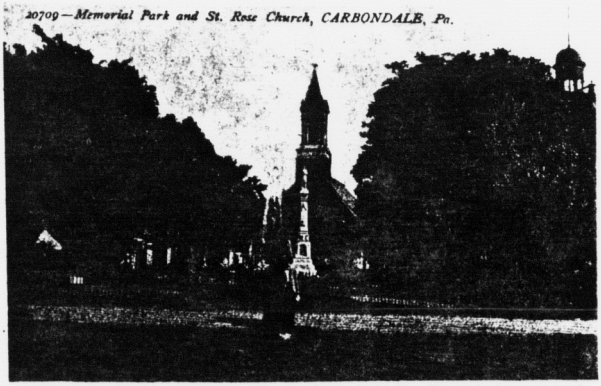
Up to the time when Carbondale's first City Hall (see "The History of City Hall," published in the NEWS, December 21, 1981, page 1) was erected in 1852, the lots on which the present-day city hall and Memorial Park are located were a desolate wasteland that was occasionally used by baseball players and the many circuses that visited Carbondale. Before that time, these two lots were used as a training ground by the local militia and were known as "the parade ground."

When it became publicly known that the Select Council and the Common Council were planning to erect a city hall in Carbondale, a group of prominent and civic-minded citizens (H.S. Pierce, J.P. Foster, I.H. Russ, William Root, G.R. Love, J.M. Poor, J.H. Estabrook, J.G. Murray, G.M. Reynolds and J.R. Fordham) sent the following petition to the city's Councils:

"Having heard that your bodies contemplate building a city hall and believing there is no site so good as the parade ground, we would respectfully ask that you take such steps as are necessary for the removal of the barn now on said ground."

The exact location of the city hall that was erected on the former parade ground in 1852 has not yet been learned, but it is likely that the building was situated on, or near, the site of the present city hall. If that was the case, then one-half of the former desolate wasteland in the heart of the city was, in 1852, transformed into the landscaped terrain that surrounded the 1852 City Hall.

The other half of the former parade ground, present-day Memorial Park, was not transformed into a park until the 1880s. The first step toward reclaiming what is now Memorial Park was made, we learn from the 1901 "Carbondale Souvenir Booklet," by the William H. Davies Post 187, G.A.R., which issued an appeal to the public for funds for fencing the ground, erecting a monument and a fountain. A Monument and Park Fund was established and Joseph B. Van Bergen and J.M. Alexander were named



MEMORIAL PARK and St. Rose Church, Carbondale, Pa. Shown in this post card from the Russell Homestead Photograph Archive, are the watering trough on North Main Street across from City Hall, the fountain in Memorial Park with an allegorical figure on the second level, the Civil War monument (dedicated May 30, 1885), and St. Rose Church. (See story this page.)

chairmen and secretary. In **The Carbondale Advance** of May 16, 1885 (Volume XXVIII, Number 52, page 3), the following contributions to this fund were acknowledged for that week: Employees of Delaware & Hudson Canal Company's Round House, collected by S.H. Bryant, $6.50; "A Friend of the Vets," $10; John Mohrs, $5; Thomas Oliver, $5; John R. Price, $2; M.G. White, New York, $1; D.D. Entrot, $1; Edward Havard, $1. Total for the week: $31.50. Previously acknowledged, $3,800.11. Grand Total, $3,831.61.

In a related article on the same page in that same issue of **The Carbondale Advance**" is the following paragraph of information about the fundraising activitiers of the Monument and Park Fund Committee:

"On account of Memorial Day coming on Saturday, and the varied duties connected with the observance of the day by all of the Posts, a large delegation need not be looked for from out of town. Hence the proposed dinner on that day has been deferred until the 4th of July, when the ladies will have a dinner and ice cream festival in the City Hall, for the benefit of the Park fund. It is to be hoped that similar efforts on the part of churches or other organizations will be postponed or had previous to that time so that nothing will tend to compromise this last effort to raise funds to meet the bills becoming due at that time. The Association has an ardous task before it yet to complete the work on the Park, and as it is for the public good, we hope there will be no opposition to making this festival a success."

The total cost of creating Memorial Park was $4,645.09. The city appropriated $1,000 and the remaining money was riased by entertainments and by individual contributions. The William H. Davies Post 187, G.A.R., gave $160. The first contribution from the general public was from a poor woman, who gave twenty-five cents. The largest individual contribution was $110. Unfortunately, the names of both of these contributors have not come down to us.

N.B. The penultimate sentence on this page should read: "The largest individual contribution was $100."